

259 Villa

[For those driving, please park on Prairie St. To enter, please walk down the long drive to the side porch toward the rear of the house. The front entrance is being used as the exit.]

The flat open for tour is being shown without furnishings to allow visitors to concentrate on the architectural details—fireplaces, woodwork, and stained glass.]

The house was built for \$4,500 by Henry Jensen in 1886 for Jesse Anderson Townsend. (Jensen was the carpenter for 600 Margaret Place and 18 Warwick Place, both on our 1988 tour.) Townsend was a Watch Factory employee who worked his way up from assistant foreman to head of the Escape Department. He died in Rochester, Minnesota, at age 58. Ownership passed from the Townsend family in 1964.

The style of 259 Villa has been called "Eclectic." This high Victorian home exhibits details from the Stick and Queen Anne styles along with Eastlake details.

Queen Anne influences include the stained glass, semicircular balcony, large window with leaded glass transom, turned porch posts, and smaller brackets. Eastlake touches appear in the carved flowers in the porch gable, actually pressed sheet metal; in the sunburst motifs and geometric designs done in pressed metal panels at the cornice; and in the Terra cotta decorative elements. Other stylistic features include stick style lattice work, the Moorish arch on the second-story balcony, and the Chicago-style bay window (designed to increase ventilation in the city buildings).

This is also one of the last homes in Elgin to exhibit original cresting, the ornamental railing presenting flowers and medieval spears in the iron crest above the front cornice. Half of the original crest was missing but was faithfully duplicated by Woodruff and Edwards shortly before the foundry closed. Similar crestings were removed for the recycling of war materials from many of the nation's homes during World War II.

A few years ago, the right front door's cut and etched glass window was broken. It was replaced at a cost of \$2,000 by an artisan in Cary, one of the few people left in the nation who can do the cut-glass work.

The home has seen much restoration by previous owners. The kitchen cabinets are a combination of

salvaged cabinets and original cabinets found in this home. All were refinished and redesigned to fit into the present kitchen plan.

In the parlors, the fireplace mantles and some woodwork have been left unpainted. The mantles are an Eastlake detail. The overmantle was designed in an effort to reform the homemaker's practice of displaying "knick-knacks" all around the parlor. "Instead, Eastlake recommended a 'little museum' of shelves over the fireplace to hold only objects of quality." (*The Old House Journal*) Charles Locke Eastlake's "Hints On Household Taste" was published and popular in 1868 and made "Eastlake" literally a "household name." "Eastlake" became synonymous with "art furniture."

The double-hung stained glass windows in the main entrance have a story. "A few owners ago," the stained glass was removed; the glass was taken by the outgoing owners who believed the glass would hang beautifully elsewhere. The new owners, who were persistent in their requests and the belief that the original features belong in a home, were able to persuade the previous owners. The glass was "bought back and brought back" and restored to its rightful home.

[Upon exiting, glance across the street to the house on the corner, 257 Villa, which was recently purchased by two GPA members. Another restoration has begun . . .]

